"To promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which inhere in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church; to provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian Rural Civilization.*"

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GOD IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

By A. T. Mosher*

One half of the people of the world gain their livelihood cultivating the soil. They, and the local tradesmen and aftsmen allied with them, comprise a rural-agricultural ppulation of over a million and a quarter people. Yet in ery culture in which large cities have developed, it is e urban people who tend to determine the institutional tterns and standards of the whole culture. That these ty-determined patterns and standards are often inimical the growth of rural people and of rural institutions is o often ignored.

This article is an attempt to outline some recent trends nd neglected insights with respect to the Christian move-ent among rural people. Many of these insights have merged from the Christian movement in the dominantly ral countries of Asia and Africa. In those countries, as India where at least eighty percent of the people are ral, the approach of the Christian movement to rural eople is of paramount importance. But it is scarcely less nportant in the highly urbanized and industrialized ountries of Europe, America, and Japan, because of the nseparable connection between the adequacy of the rural rogram of Christian forces and the vitality of the urban hurch.

Five streams of thought have converged in recent dis-ussions of the Christian movement among rural people: rst, a realization that there are cultural differences be-ween the people of the cities and those of the countryside hich must be taken into account in presenting the Gospel them; second, an insistence that there are religious alues inherent in the processes of rural living (par-icularly in the processes of agriculture) which should be ecognized, strengthened, and utilized by the Christian rogram; third, a recognition that the Christian rural rogram must be as broad as the wholesome interests of ural people; fourth, a belief that the Church ought to e unique in any neighborhood, an instrument by which od implements his will through a serving fellowship f those who love him; and fifth, an understanding of the ontribution of rural churches to the vitality of urban hurches.

I. Presenting the Gospel to Rural People

The strong recent emphasis on adapting the approach of the Christian program to the immediate group the program is meant to reach was inaugurated by the International Missionary Conference in Jerusalem in 1928. Dr. Kenyon L. Butterfield held that there are at least three groups of people for whom a distinctive approach is needed: agricultural people, urban industrial workers, and the intelligentsia.

The more commonly accepted contrasts between rural and urban cultural traits include the following: (1) rural life predisposes one to think in organic terms; urban life encourages one to think in mechanical or financial terms; (2) the immediate effect on family welfare of weather, animal disease, and other natural forces causes rural people to be constantly aware of their dependence on non-human forces over which they have no control, whereas urban people live largely within controlled conditions and the forces beyond their control which affect their welfare are chiefly the actions of other people; (3) rural people, dealing with succeeding generations of crops and livestock and with slow changes in soil fertility, tend to remember the past and to plan into the future, whereas urban living puts a premium on the present—it facilitates forgetting the past and discounting the future; (4) in rural life the family is the economic unit—small children, husbands, wives, and elderly people are all economic assets —whereas in the city if there are children in the family they are an expense in themselves and their mother can seldom add to the family's money income.[1]

These differences between rural and urban cultures in the United States are accentuated in many of the countries of the Near and Far East. Dr. Harold B. Allen, of the Near East Foundation, has pointed out how great the rural-urban chasm is. Often people of the village and of the city in Eastern lands speak different languages; consequently people from one area find it difficult even to converse with those from the other. When a people is in transition from a static agrarian tradition to an urban-industrial economy, as in India today, the old traditions are often greatly weakened or even abandoned in the cities while they still dominate the lives of those who

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[1] See, for example, O. E. Baker, "Rural and Urban Philosophies," Christian Rural Fellowship Bulletin, No. 10, Agricultural Missions, Inc., from "Farming as a Life Work," a paper delivered at the Rural Youth Conference, University of Illinois, April 27, 1935.

remain in the villages. All of these accentuate the gulf between the countryside and the cities.

Of course, all of these rural-urban differences are a matter of degree. In America there are probably many more people in whom both rural and urban tendencies are merged than there are those who seem to typify either the one or the other. But even here the differencs remain significant, and in India, China, Iran, and many other countries, they are so great as to divide a people into separate worlds.

The significance of these cultural differences for the Christian movement emerges at two points. First, if the Christian Gospel is to be meaningful to people it must be presented in ways which are within their thought and behavior patterns. Since these patterns are different for city and for country people different approaches are needed in order to make the Gospel meaningful to them. Second, if Christians are to grow in discipleship they must recognize and set themselves to achieving the implications of Christian teaching for the daily tasks and opportunities which arise within their workaday lives. Thus both in comprehending Christian truth and in achieving a pattern of life consonant with its implications, the differences between rural and urban modes of life and thought need to be understood and to be respected in the program of the Christian movement.

II. Religious Values of Rural Living

In bringing into this article mention of recent thought about the religious values of rural living, we include a subject which is in great need of fresh critical examination by Christian thinkers who are essentially country-men. This examination is called for by the fact that too often a single valid insight has been considered without relation to others equally valid. We have had too few critical attempts to harmonize and synthesize these. All that can be done here is to record some of these separate insights, and to indicate the direction in which this writer feels that a synthesis in conformity with the Christian revelation may be found.

There has been a steady insistence in recent years that, beyond the differences between rural and urban cultures noted in the foregoing section, there are religious values inherent in rural living which are not to be found in city life. This insistence is usually carried to the point of proclaiming that the religious values of rural life are much greater than those of the city. The present writer feels that this insistence on the relative superiority of rural life is not needed in order to recognize the positive religious values of rural culture, and that many do disservice to the cause of rural life by overstating its case.

It may be well to state baldly the major source of controversy in this field. This is the tendency of many Christians to look on any suggestion that religious values inhere in rural living as a reversion to nature religion. Thus, one of the books which has been widely quoted and very helpful in this field, THE HOLY EARTH, by Liberty Hyde Bailey, has been discounted by many simply because of the connotations of the title, connotations, incidentally, which are repudiated by Dr. Bailey in the body of the book. A missionary wrote home from India that Hindus think too much about Mother Earth anyway; let us not abet their superstition by speaking of the earth as holy. Because of this tendency to equate "religious values of rural living" with a nature religion, and often with pantheism, it is important to understand with precision what validity, if any, these values have in developing Christian discipleship.

The Witness of Nature to God

The first religious value of rural living has centered in the contention that man may learn about God through nature, coupled with the fact that rural living revolves around natural processes: growth, birth, death, interdependence. There is no disagreement so far. Paul subscribed to this belief. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom. 1:20). The Psalmist is very often moved to song by finding God in nature:

"Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain;
Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters;
Who maketh the clouds his chariot;
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind" (104;2,3)

Every man who walks the fields knows that the plants and the birds and the beasts point to a power beyond man to whom, or to which, he is subject.

The disagreement arises over the degree to which the witness of nature to God is adequate. And this is the point at which nature religion and the Old Testament part company. A nature religion results when men learn of God *only* through nature. Seeing the power of the natural world about them they tend to deify the earth which gives or withholds her fertility. They deify the clouds and the rivers which grant or deny moisture for their crops and water for their wells.

It may be that nature tells us a number of different things about God. In NATURE SPEAKS OF GOD the author maintains that nature reveals: (1) the beauty of God, (2) the providence of God, (3) the redemption of God, (4) the lesson of sacrifice, and (5) the triumph of patient love. Others, however, have seen in natural phenomena the perfidy of God, the willfulness of God, the neglect of God. Paul added a phrase to the passage quoted about setting limits to the witness of nature to God: "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even his eternal power and Godhead.*"

Within those limits, the argument is sound; there is no question but that nature witnesses to the *power* and to the *Godhead* of God. God as *creator* is dramatically revealed by nature. These witnesses are all around rural people every day. They have their effect. Rural people are so strongly affected by these that almost all of them become either negatively or positively religious. In the absence of some other revelation of God, they will create a "natural" concept of a God who may be either benevolent of malevolent or neutral, depending on the temperament of his creators. This is the justification for Rauschnig's characterization, in THE CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION, of the farmer as being always semi-pagan. Rural people cannot ignore God. They must either come to know him, or else deify his powers which surround them every day.

The Religion of Rural Israel

It has often been pointed out that the Old Testament records the religious experiences of a rural people. Bu

[2] Bonsack, Charles P., *Christian Rural Fellowship Bulleti* No. 36.

dd Testament Judaism is a far cry from a nature religion. here are very important differences which concern us hich concern us here. First, in its revealed ethical mono- eism God is still in nature but he transcends it as well. od's creative hand stirs life in the seed. His will is in e winds. His spirit broods over the land. But he is hovah, above and beyond the natural world, working his ill in it while transcending it.

Second, God reveals himself in other ways than through ture. He speaks to those who seek him. He quickens s prophets. And in the messianic hope lay the confident nviction that some day God himself would walk among en. All of these avenues for revelation opened possibili- s for knowing God far beyond the omnipresent but mited witness of the natural world.

Third, man came to know himself as bound for a destiny hich set him apart from the rest of the natural world. e came to know himself as being separate from the other eatures of the natural world in a special sense; he knew mself to have been granted dominion over the natural orld.

Fourth, man learned the possibility of his becoming -worker with God. The moment man became a trustee of ature, rather than merely a part of it, he was in a sition to advance or to thwart God's purposes with spect to it. Now man's conscious decisions could enhance could decrease the productivity of the soil. Now he was sponsible for developing land policies which would con- ibute to the welfare of the family and of the tribe and the nation. The whole Deuteronomic land law, including ch provisions as that for a sabbatical rest for each field nd for a periodic Year of Jubilee when all lands would evert to the original family ownership, was a recognition f the significance of land management in the religion of srael.

It is important to note, in passing, that in many "pagan" eligions, similar practical responsibilities toward the land ad been recognized and accepted, sometimes as an out- rowth of deification of the powers of God (or the gods) n rural life, and sometimes as an outgrowth of ancestor vorship. There is in ancient Hinduism, for example, a rovision very similar to the Year of Jubilee of the Israel- tes. In his account of the Ashanti tribe of Africa,[3] Captain Rattray records the fact that responsibility for careful land nanagement is looked upon as a responsibility to one's ncestors.

When people who have already accepted such responsi- ilities as implications of non-Christian religions are con- erted through contact with Jesus Christ, it is important hat every effort be made to conserve these previous pat- erns of responsibility by relating them to Christian truth.

Contribution of Jesus to Rural People's Understanding of God

It is obviously an over-simplification to state that the edemptive method of God was revealed through Jesus Christ, while his creative role was revealed during the revious history of Israel. There are fore-shadowings of God's redemptive plan in Isaiah, in Hosea, and at many ther points in the Old Testament; there are creative spects to the revelation through Jesus Christ. While Jesus said he had come to seek and to save that which was ost, he also said he had come that men might have life nd have it more abundantly. Despite these hints about redemption in the Old Testament and the elements of creation in the teachings of Jesus, it is well to remember that Jesus sought to supersede the Pharisees rather than to replace paganism. The Israelites had already come a long way from a nature religion. They had long recognized the implications of their faith for ethical living not only in social relationships but in a devoted trusteeship of the natural world over which God had given them dominion. These Jesus took for granted; he had come to fulfill.

In Jesus Christ God created the new man; this did not supersede but complemented God's eternal creative processes in nature. It furthered God's intent that man become co-worker with him. One field for this co-working is in man's cultivation of, and dominion over, the natural world.

Such a survey helps us to see the sources from which different elements in rural people's understanding of God have come. Furthermore, it helps to explain why in many instances the program of the Christian movement among rural people has been much narrower than its mandate. When Paul said, "I determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified," he was speaking of his ministry to a people who were well acquainted with the ways in which nature does speak of God, and who also were the inheritors of a long tradition of ethical monotheism where trusteeship of natural resources was accepted. Too often in recent years we have forgotten this and have made the program of the Christian movement Christocentric to the point of ignoring the base on which Jesus himself built.

The Christian ministry to people reared in a pagan religion needs to combine the whole process of an interpretation of the valid witness of the natural world to God, the development of responsible ethical monotheism, and the crowning revelation of God in Jesus Christ. In lands where Christianity has long been established it adds to the comprehension rural people have of God and his purposes to have the whole development recapitulated until they can appreciate both the contributions and the limitations of the witness of the natural world to God and until they recognize as opportunities for co-working with God the daily tasks which face them in the fields and in the home.

Moreover, so long as the limitations of the revelation of God through nature are understood, rural living can be greatly enriched by glad appreciation of the goodness of God's natural creation. Ability to appreciate the good things of the world of nature becomes itself a resource for abundant rural living.[4]

III. Revelation Through Christian Living

Missionaries to an entirely non-Christian culture have the task of making Jesus Christ known, loved, and obeyed among men who have not known him. Although the Scriptural injunctions to which they usually trace their call use, in the English translation, the phrase "go teach," many missionaries have been discerning enough to realize that the "go make disciples" translation, or "go reveal," might be a happier English expression for the intent of the command.

[3] Rattray, R. S., *Ashanti,* Oxford University Press, 1923.

[4] Two other advantages of rural living for religious growth can only be mentioned here. Each is of great importance and is receiving increasing attention. One is the advantage of rural living for sound family development. The other is the central importance of the small neighborhood in the nurture of healthful group life.

On many occasions missionaries have plunged into activities other than the usual preaching and teaching, traditional in the lands of their birth, in response to what they considered humanitarian motives quite apart from their evangelistic purpose. As late as a decade ago missionary periodicals carried many articles debating the relevance of famine and flood relief activities to the missionary purpose. Even today there is an occasional reference to schools and hospitals as secondary or peripheral activities of Christian missions.

But very often missionaries have discovered (sometimes with amazement, although this is not to their credit) that helping people in their suffering, co-operating with them in their struggles, has revealed something of the Christ about whom they had been speaking in ways words had not been able to do. Those missionaries eager to defend the established patterns of their homelands dwelt on the incompleteness of this witness or, at best, granted it a supporting role as a method of preparing the way for "real evangelistic activities." Those who were less concerned with tradition sometimes went to the other extreme by entering into the everyday problems of people and seeing in this a new, more effective, major method which ought to replace the old. This difference of opinion developed into the long debate of the relative merits of preaching and of personal example in bringing men to Christ.

Increasingly, and especially within the past decade, it is being recognized that the shortcoming in missionary method was not in the adoption of one and in the rejection of the other of these two approaches, but precisely in the divorce of the two. God is revealed through incarnation in Christian living, in individual, and group discipleship which cannot remain mute about the faith which is in it, and which seeks to do the will of God in all the problems of everyday life.

Thus we have come in China and India and Africa to the concept of the "comprehensive Christian program," not through any annexation of peripheral humanitarian aims to a central evangelistic purpose, but because it is our task to reveal, through Christ, a God whose will for men encompasses all phases of their lives, and because this God can only be revealed through his will incarnate, albeit imperfect, in the individual and group living of those who love him and who seek to do his will. We have learned that every phase of truly Christian living has an evangelistic influence, that words will always have their place as a medium of love and of understanding, but that love and understanding move as well by media other than words. Every phase of Christian living is at the same time a method of achieving Christian discipleship and a witness to the faith of the individual or of the group in God.

If God reveals himself through Christian living, the Christian movement ought to be as broad as the wholesome interests of the people to whom it seeks to reveal God, in order to incarnate an approximation of the implications of God's will throughout all of life. This is no more true for rural than for urban groups. It may be, however, that the tasks and conditions of rural living make it easier of accomplishment among rural people. Moreover, it appears that we have gone further in discerning fundamentally Christian implications of rural than for urban living. This may account for our having moved more rapidly toward a comprehensive Christian program for rural areas than toward a similarly comprehensive Christian program for the cities.

IV. The Church as a Worshipping-Serving Fellowship

There is nothing new about the concept of the Church as a worshipping-serving fellowship; the Church has always had its life centered in worship and has usually felt a responsibility for trying to mediate God's love, and grace, and judgment to those about it. However, two developments in the lands of the younger Churches mark constructive steps toward more fully realizing this ideal for our generation, and these may clarify certain unmet needs of the rural Church in Europe and America. One of these is the bringing together of the worshipping and serving phases of the life of the Church in new modes of worship which embody the contemporary social responsibilities of the Christian congregation. The second is a new understanding, translated into program, of the role of the Church in the community life of its neighborhood.

As comprehension of the implications of the Christian revelation for rural living has grown, missionaries have had to face the problem of weaving convictions respecting these implications into the fabric of common faith and behavior. A new realization of the soil as a resource, provided by God and placed in the custody of men, results in sound soil management practices only when it becomes part of the common faith, expressed in worship. The process which Charles Clayton Morrison pointed out in THE SOCIAL GOSPEL AND THE CHRISTIAN CULTUS is absolutely essential: the demands of Christian discipleship in the fields of social and economic responsibility will always be considered by most people to be extraneous to the Christian Gospel unless or until they become part of the "confessional utterance of the worshipping congregation." This was verified empirically by the statistical study of Christian group movements in India;[5] in this study it was found that the greatest factor in the growth of Christians in enlightening social behavior was daily group worship.

As a result of this comprehension of one of the roles of worship, there is growing up throughout the world an increasing body of worship materials embodying the implications and items of Christian discipleship in rural life, and an increasing practice of adapting the worship program of the rural congregation to the agricultural year and to the periodic events in community life which offer specialized opportunities for Christian discipleship. *Rural People at Worship* brings together a number of these new rural worship materials;[6] others are available in the mimeograph series of Agricultural Missions, Inc. Harvest festivals, seed-time worship services, home dedication exercises, tree-planting programs, rites celebrating entry to adulthood to replace pagan initiation ceremonies, are all taking their places in this trend. Worship is being so molded as to clothe the demands of contemporary rural discipleship in religious robes, thereby bringing programs of Christian service under the judgment of Christian truth and weaving together the worship and service aspects of the life of the Church. We have learned that individual and group Christian discipleship does not result from a loose confederation of worship habits inherited from another century (perhaps from another culture), based largely on personal piety, and of a program of service to the contemporary problems of the neighborhood and of the world.

[5] Pickett, J. W., et al., *Christian Mass Movements in India.*
[6] Ziegler, Edward K., Agricultural Missions, Inc.

The second development in this field has been a new comprehension of the role of the Christian congregation a neighborhood. In many lands the Church has developed in neighborhoods where there is little institutional provision for medical care, education, or joint economic action. Realizing that these services are essential growing Christian discipleship, as well as to the general welfare of all in the neighborhood, the Church has often undertaken to provide them. Here again, many missionaries, reared in a culture where such functions are not only specialized and separate but often secularized, looked on these activities as outside the proper province of the church. For a time, therefore, there was a distinction between "Church activities" of missionaries and other "important but non-Church" activities. Now, however, even this distinction is disappearing. A list of the fields in which the Extension Service of the Nanking Theological Seminary is counselling rural Churches in North China is revealing: Gospel extension, adult education, literacy and literature, family welfare, village crafts, child care and guidance, first aid, hygiene, village sanitation, midwifery training, health surveys, farming practices, animal breeding, animal disease prevention and treatment, boys and girls clubs, churchmanship training, citizenship training, temperance education, etc.

Today the accepted principle seems to be that stated by Rev. Shirley E. Greene, of Merom Institute, Merom, Indiana. "The church may do anything which meets a real human need; and it must be ready to quit anything which can find some other agency to do better."[7]

Two questions are raised by this recognition that all needs of the neighborhood are legitimate interests of the Church but that administration of programs for meeting them should be relinquished by the Church to other agencies whenever those agencies are adequate. The first question is: What is the responsibility of the Church for those areas of neighborhood need which have been turned over to community agencies? The second question is: What should the relationship be between the Church and these community agencies?

The answer to the first question has been carefully stated in *The Christian Mission Among Rural People*.[8] This statement might well be taken as a definition of the social role of the Church in a rural neighborhood:

> It has been recognized that some activities of the Comprehensive Christian Program may be carried on by organizations other than the church. To the degree that this is true, the function of the church will be to judge those activities, to assess their contributions, to interpret their significance, and to suggest ways of integrating them into the life of the neighbourhood.
>
> This task is the social counterpart of a function of Christian discipleship for the individual. Allegiance to God can pull the life of the individual together, resulting in an integrated personality. It is a task of the rural church to seek a similar integration of the activities of the neighbourhood by referring all of them to the same ultimate reality. Lacking such integration, a variety of activities may make the life of a neighbourhood hectic and conflicting, rather than abundant and meaningful.
>
> *Integration in the task of Christian discipleship is what distinguishes the Christian program in rural areas from secular programs for rural development.* In the Christian program, agricultural improvement is not an end in itself but a phase of more efficient trusteeship of God-given resources. Health development is not an end in itself but is another phase of trusteeship. Education is never an isolated attainment but is always a training for competence in Christian service. Cooperative societies are not allowed to be considered a panacea, but remain that which they really are, a tool. No phase of the program is allowed to become an end in itself; it is (or ought to be) always related to other phases of a way of life which loves God and which sees the implications of the Good News of Christ for all phases of rural life.
>
> If only the church would accept this role of integration in neighbourhood life, it would be in a sound position to recognize, utilize, and cooperate with many splendid neighbourhood programs now conducted under other auspices.

The second question, that of the relationship between the Church and community agencies, might be alternatively stated as that of the relationship between the Church and the so-called secular agencies. The fact that the functions of these agencies are found, in the absence of such agencies, to be essential activities in achieving Christian discipleship, suggests that they may continue to be important phases of the Christian program in a neighborhood even when they are no longer administered by the Church. For this reason the comprehensive Christian program is made up of all of those activities which contribute to achieving Christian discipleship, by whomever administered. This calls for a constructive appreciation by the Church of the task these agencies are performing.

> It is a good time to suggest that from now on we more seriously attempt to assess and understand the very great contributions to the Kingdom of God which are being made by many of the so-called secular agencies, especially those that are related to agriculture, the home, health and other community interests. And, furthermore, that we go as far as we can in cooperating with them and, in turn, get their cooperation in the service of the church. To my mind, one of the greatest weaknesses of organized religion, and therefore of loss to it, today, is that we have no adequate way to recognize and utilize the tremendous spiritual, ethical and moral values which undergird the services of these secular agencies. Thousands of their personnel are members of our churches, but because we have no ecclesiastical or administrative relation to or control over them, we naïvely assume they are none of our concern. Here and there, and increasingly so, there are exceptions, but, by and large, we have supinely acquiesced in the process by which great areas of life—agriculture, the home, the school, health, recreation—have been secularized and commercialized. But God is in them all and we must proclaim his Lordship over them.[9]

V. Contribution of the Rural Church to the Vitality of the Urban Church

The fifth stream of thought grows out of our knowledge of the rural-urban population flow. The population of modern cities is maintained and increased by an influx of immigrants from the countryside. Only in rural areas is there a net increase in population. Birth rates are not high enough in industrialized cities to maintain the population.

One consequence of this is that urban institutions must depend on constant renewal by people moving into the city from the country. This is equally true of the urban Church. Since most of those who move to the city do so in young adulthood, and since religious faith is developed

[7] Greene, Shirley E., "A Church Program for the Rural Community," *Christian Rural Fellowship Bulletin*, No. 62.

[8] To be published this summer by Agricultural Missions, Inc.

[9] Reisner, John H., *Christian Rural Fellowship News Letter*, Jan. 18, 1944.

chiefly during childhood, it follows that much of the vitality of urban Churches must depend on the Christian nurture given its boys and girls by the rural Church.

Recognition of this dependence of the urban Church on the rural Church will not affect the policy of the rural Church as such, for it will do its best in any case. It is a factor which ought to be given great weight, however, in regional and national Church policy. It is in the interest of urban Churches to make sure that rural Churches are strong, since so much of their own strength must depend on the early training of rural youth. That this factor is not sufficiently recognized is evident from the regional policies of Churches in almost every land.

A common fallacy in this matter is to too easy assumption that Christian influence will spread from a city into the surrounding countryside. There are several reasons why this seldom happens. One is the difference in urban and rural cultural patterns; and it is important to recall that this is relatively more important in the Orient than in the Occident. Another is the dominantly one-way population flow from the countryside to the cities; this is important everywhere and ignored everywhere. A third is the condescending manner, conscious or unconscious, with which city people regard their brothers of the countryside. In the Occident and increasingly in the Orient, we live among city-centered ideals and institutions. This fallacy appeared as recently as last year in a statement by the Christian Council of China. In recording a decision to make the development of strong city churches its first concern, this statement listed "responsibility for fostering neighbouring rural Churches" as one of the justifications for building up city Churches with "reserve strength." We may wish that city Church might foster neighboring rural Churches but, for reasons already stated, they seldom can.

Conclusions

If the Christian movement is to incorporate these insights into its program, certain developments are called for. Some of these have already been undertaken. The first, already begun at Nanking Theological Seminary and in certain Occidental seminaries, is provision for ministerial training which takes into account the distinctive demands of the rural ministry. These include, on the one hand, an ability to express Christian truth in patterns comprehensible and congenial to rural people, and, on the other, training for the broad pastoral ministry of leading a congregation in the community-serving activities of the whole Christian group.

A second necessary development is the working out of an institutional pattern of Church organization compatible with the economic ability and social structure of rural society in each cultural region of the earth.

Third, if the responsibility of the rural Church extends to every wholesome interest of rural people, then there is need for the variegated ministry called for by Dr. Visser 't Hooft in "Reconstruction and Inter-Church Aid in Europe": men and women thoroughly grounded in Christian truth and trained to relate to this the specialized fields of economics, psychology, sociology, medicine, education, etc.

Fourth, regional Church policy must recognize the contributions of the rural Church to the vitality of the urban Church and make provision for financial aid to rural Churches where this is needed. There is particular need for policies which make it financially possible for good ministers to remain in rural parishes through their ministries.